

Reclaim Education

Notes on the global struggle

Campus Rebellion Reignites Across The U.K.

In response to three fold tuition hikes initiated in 2010, the struggle for free education has once again escalated in the UK. Since October, the higher education sector has coordinated national pay strikes by all major unions, widespread picketing and nearly a dozen campus occupations. The movement is in opposition to privatization; ranging from the selling-off of student debt to the outsourcing of services. The larger wave of discontent first emerged when the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC) and National Union of Students (NUS) coordinated the Parliament Square demonstration of November 2010. During which 50,000 students occupied Tory HQ in downtown London. Unrest swept the country leading to December 9th, 2010 (DayX) when occupations spread to over 50 universities.

During the recent 2013 semester, the UK student movement has seen a resurgence of direct-action tactics and corresponding wave of autonomous student occupations across university campuses. During this time, the government has started selling student loan stock to private investors. Students in Birmingham are facing immense court costs for occupying the university senate chambers. Meanwhile, Occupy Sussex hosted a walk out and week of action to reinstate the five students suspended for protesting against the privatization of staff labor. Although the effort was successful, the #FarthingsFive still face disciplinary action despite lack of evidence on behalf of the administration. Liverpool and Sheffield also hosted autonomous sit-ins. In Ulster, the occupation of the senior common room which is scheduled to be turned into a corporate dining facility had their water and electricity cut off.

The Warwick Art Center was occupied in solidarity with a worker's pay strike. At Goldsmith, over a hundred students occupied the administration offices alongside the second worker strike against cuts in salaries. As one student put it "*Our objective is simple: to escalate.*" The Queens Building at the University of Exeter was also



occupied on December 3rd. The following day a demonstration took place at the University of London in opposition to the Universities decision to disband the student union. Police on horseback disbanded the assembly surrounding the senate chambers with batons. A violent eviction of the ongoing occupation followed resulting in the arrest of 40 students. Most were charged with 'aggravated trespass' and some students are prohibited from publically congregating. The University of London was swarmed by a 'Cops Off Campus' and Book Bloc demonstration on December 11th in response to police brutality (photo shown above).

Regionally, the NCAFC initiative was founded in February 2010 and has grown into a large network of activists throughout the UK organizing in response to the cuts in education (anti-cuts.com). The NCAFC is structured on a direct-democracy procedural model with regional caucuses including Wales and Scotland. The students organize via open committees which consists of 14 permanent members with 1 permanent delegate from each Region and Liberation Campaigns (Women's, Black Power, Disabled and LGBTQ). These caucuses tend to focus on student related issues but nevertheless maintain a larger social critique of

About this newsletter

This newsletter is part of the communication infrastructure of the independent platform International Student Movement (ISM). The ISM is being used and shaped by individuals and groups around the world who are struggling against the increasing commercialisation of education and for free emancipatory education for all. This newsletter is the result of voluntary work done by a few individuals who are passionate about the cause. The positions expressed are not in any way representative for any group or the ISM as a whole.

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current power relations. The NCAFC exists independent of both the autonomous occupations and more formal NUS.

In preparation for 2014, Occupy Sussex and Defend Education Birmingham initiated a call in early December for an open-coordination meeting to take place in Birmingham later in January.

Cops Off Campus.



Struggle for Refugee Rights and the Autonomous Center in Hamburg



Students struggling for everyone's right to stay in HH. Banner: "Bringing Politic lessons to the street."

To prevent the deportation of two fellow students, a school strike was arranged across France in October 2013. Shortly thereafter in Hamburg - a harbour city in northern Germany - students stood in solidarity with the group of refugees known as the "Lampedusa group", who are currently being threatened with deportation. Among others, the teachers union GEW called for a Lampedusa solidarity protest on November 2nd, where an estimated 20,000 people gathered to show their support. The current situation of the group serves as an example of how inhumanely refugees lack basic human rights in Germany and throughout Europe. The group was initially forced to flee to Italy as the result of the war in Libya.

People seek to escape their homelands for a wide range of reasons from civil war to climate deterioration. Out of 45 million refugees worldwide, 300,000 asylum requests were submitted in the whole

of Europe. The attempt to seal off Europe even further costs thousands of lives - be it by drowning in the Mediterranean Sea or dying along other European borders. On average 84% of all asylum requests in Germany are denied. Students are also effected by deportation. In 2011, 9 minors were deported from Hamburg and another 31 in the following 18 months.

School Strike

In response to the ongoing deportations, students organised a school strike on December 12th. Consequently between 3,500 and 5,000 school students as well as supporters gathered in the streets of Hamburg. Unsurprisingly the demo was not supported by the school board. School authorities even attempted to intimidate pupils by threatening to register all who are missing classes and that everyone who attends the protest needs to present a letter of apology from the

parents. On the other hand the education union (GEW) supported the action saying that it is "a practical lesson in political education."

Many banners and posters were displayed with slogans such as "no border; no nation; stop deportation!" More than 400 pupils and students also rallied in Frankfurt on the same day. The rally was supported by the general students' committee of the Goethe University of Frankfurt.

Demonstration Leading to the Riot

Only a week later around 10,000 people took to the streets with an international demonstration in Hamburg on December 21st scheduled to begin at 2pm. Rote Flora is a former theatre, which has been squatted in November 1989 before being turned into an autonomous social centre scheduled for eviction. "We want to make clear that any attempt to evict the Rote Flora will lead to massive resistance. We focus

on the current struggles for the Esso Houses, the right of residence for refugees and the radical criticism on repression and so-called danger zones."

The situation escalated before the demo even began. Riot police stopped the demo after 10 meters because the march began early. Protesters refused to stop and police began to attack the demo with water cannons and batons. To many observers this was obviously a tactic of escalation by the authorities. After the attack the demo was declared to be illegal by the police.

Consequently a riot broke out and barricades were erected in different parts of the city. During the rest of the day people clashed with riot cops in different parts of the city, smaller groups continued the protest in the city centre which was declared a "danger zone" by the police ahead of the protests. Within those "danger

zones" anyone can be detained without justification.

Secondary demonstrations spontaneously formed with around 1,000 people each. Since all protests were declared illegal, demonstrators were regularly chased and attacked by riot police. At around 10pm things began to calm down again.

At the end of the day the fact finding committee (EA), which is made up of lawyers supporting the protesters, released the following numbers: "Around 260 people were arrested/ detained. 500 protesters were injured, 20 of which had to be treated in hospital. Several people had broken bones and cuts, two protesters were beaten unconscious." The struggle of refugees and against gentrification continues in Hamburg and around the world.

Pictures/ video of the school strike: http://ism-global.net/school-strike_HH_dec12

